

SOCIALIST VOICE

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Racist Murders on the Rise No Shortcuts to Stop Klan

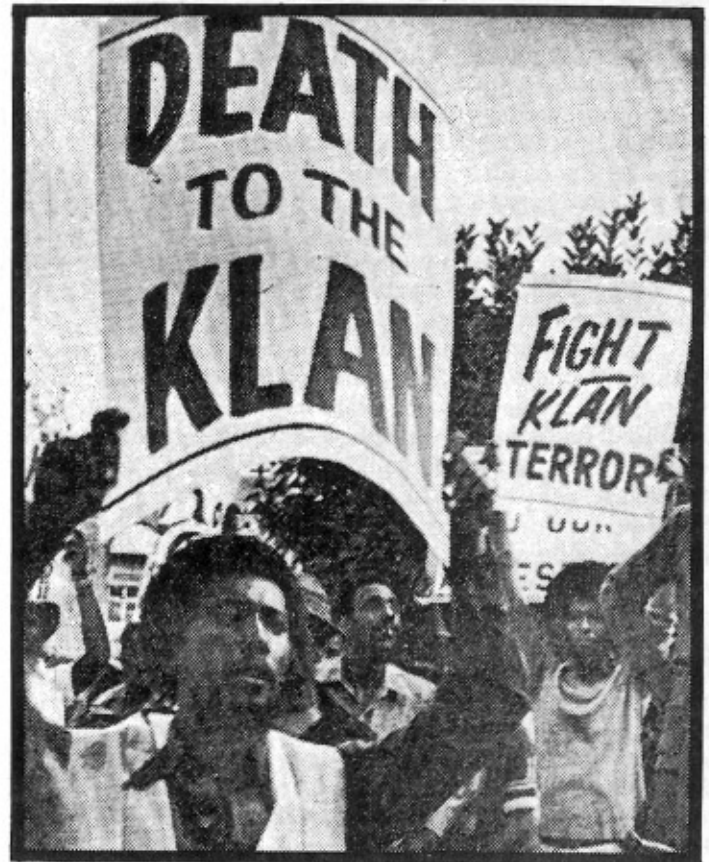
The recent growth of Nazi and Ku Klux Klan strength is an ominous portent of things to come. A future triumph of fascism will be the blood penalty masses of people will pay for the failure of socialists to help organize the working class movement and build the revolutionary party to take power.

While the fascist groups are still small, their dramatic resurgence is cause for immediate concern. According to journalistic estimates, the membership of the numerous Klan groups has grown to 10,000, double what it was in 1978. Approximately 100,000 more people are followers who either attend rallies, subscribe to publications or donate funds.

These figures are only part of the picture. The country is in the midst of a wave of kidnappings, mutilations and murders of black people. Attacks on Latins and immigrant workers are spiraling as well. Anti-Semitic vandalism is spreading. Strike-breaking and scabbing are now flaunted. Leftists have been killed with impunity.

A recent survey showed that many blacks believe that the recent atrocities are the work of a narrow conspiracy. Although, so far, there is no master plan or central authority dictating these crimes, there is nevertheless truth in the perception. The attacks have been the work of a narrow layer of racist individuals, fascist groups and police murderers. Klan groups have publicly applauded the killings of blacks. Joseph Paul Franklin, an avowed Klansman, was recently picked up on suspicion of involvement in a series of cross-country racist murders. Klan units proliferate among the police, and cops were the killers of Arthur Miller in Brooklyn in 1978 and of Arthur McDuffie in Miami in 1980 as well as many other lesser known victims.

Where the cops do not carry out the murders themselves, the whole "system of justice" provides the legal cover. The capitalist state's collusion with fascism was demonstrated by the Greensboro, North Carolina slaughter of five Communist Workers Party members and anti-Klan activists in November 1979. Police agents were linked to the Klan and Nazi groups involved, and the few murderers brought to trial were



exonerated in triumph.

However, the racist attacks have not been the work of rampaging lynch mobs bolstered by mass popular support. Not yet. The conditions that breed the fascist vermin are getting worse. If they are not eliminated, then lynch mobs and even fascist state power will be on the agenda sooner or later. These conditions stem from the fact the we live under a

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Church and State vs. Polish Workers
The Hostage Hustle**

The Hostage Hustle

On January 20, the fifty-two Americans held hostage in Iran were released as a result of a deal between Washington and Teheran. The instant hype was incredible. Television covered "The Journey Home" as if it was the Odyssey. The press dumped its load of prefabricated patriotism on what was, unfortunately, a receptive public. But the whole affair was orchestrated by the American ruling class through its White House politicians.

The hustle was designed to divert attention from the fundamental problems crippling society at home. American workers, beset by inflation, unemployment and the collapse of their hopes, feel themselves to be powerless prisoners of forces they do not understand. Identification with the seemingly innocent and helpless hostages was made easy. Beleaguered workers were asked to identify with a beleaguered America attacked by irrationally evil forces while pursuing its noble goal of bringing democracy to the world. No wonder so many people were so relieved when the hostages were finally freed. But the whole script is a fraud.

American imperialism is no innocent victim. There isn't a politician in Washington whose hands aren't dripping with the blood of thousands murdered by the U.S.'s loyal junior partner, the Shah. In fact, American capitalism has presided over oppression and exploitation all across the face of the earth in the relentless vampire pursuit of profit. It is the same capitalism that is the cause of the catastrophe facing American workers today.

If Americans are victims of a diversion, so were the masses of Iran. At the time of the embassy seizure, the Khomeini regime was anxious to re-establish connections with imperialism. But it had to face the increasingly hostile Iranian workers, who were beginning to link their deep anti-imperialist awareness with the need to oppose Khomeini's capitalist government that had brought them little but grief. To regain popularity, Khomeini leaped to the support of the students who had taken the embassy.

The January deal retrieved only a portion of Iran's resources held captive in the West; U.S. bankers, in fact, got the lion's share. But Khomeini & Co. got enough to restore their commerce with imperialism. Recovered funds will pay for increased weaponry for use not only in the war against secret documents found in the embassy, which contained data on the CIA's collaboration with the Shah's butcher regime, remain sealed. The current Iranian leaders, many of whom were themselves involved, want these files burned just as much as Washington does.

The American public has been treated to an orgy of intimate detail on the habits and horoscopes of the hostages, a display designed to obscure more than illuminate. The brightest of lights was turned onto the purported torture of the hostages. Workers everywhere abhor torture. But we can and should remain indifferent to such violence committed against CIA killers. On the other hand, masses have a legitimate need to protest even the smallest act of torture committed against innocent clerks, for example, if there were any. Sad to say, many American workers do not yet see this class difference.

Further, even if the alleged acts of brutality were committed, they were puny compared to the physical tortures, maimings, dismemberments and murders carried out in the Shah's dungeons with the knowledge, aid and complicity of the U.S. government. Carter, Reagan & Co. called the Iranians

barbarians, but when did these gentlemen ever insult the well-dressed and clean-nailed CIA murderers for killing oppressed working people abroad? Indeed, why have there been no frenzied headlines telling us that these stalwarts of civilization were leading a campaign against the murderers of black children in Atlanta? Why no Presidential screams of "barbarism" against the savages in Buffalo who kill blacks and rip the hearts out of their bodies?

American workers, you are being hustled! The politicians and the press are whipping up racist and chauvinist hostility so that once again they can send U.S. soldiers into war in order to prop up the decaying capitalist system. The present national chauvinism goes hand in hand with the regrowth of violent racism against blacks, Latins and other minorities at home, all designed to divide workers and encourage further assaults on your livelihoods. They egg you on to rage against other peoples like the Iranians. But do you think that the capitalists themselves take this seriously? After pages of blather on the hostages in the *New York Times* of January 21, there appeared a little article with the headline, "Business Interested in Trade with Iran." Oh yes, the capitalists are quite willing to make a profit together with Khomeini while they yell about him for your benefit. But they have a little problem, for the article's subhead informs us: "U.S. Companies Voice Willingness to Resume Links if Stability in Teheran Is Demonstrated." Translation: Khomeini must crush the rambunctious workers and minorities and restore order so that profits will not be interrupted again. For this, fellow workers, they may very well need your assistance — as cannon fodder. And if you succumb to racism and stew in the patriotic pap being dished out, that is what will happen. Blood, inflation, unemployment for you. Profits for them.

It is correct to hate those who torture, humiliate, make you jobless and take the food off your table. Pacifism is for idiots. Be angry and anxious to fight — but against the *real* enemy, the capitalists who are hustling us all. ■

"NO DRAFT" IS NO ANSWER!

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Church and State vs. Workers

Since the momentous strike wave of last summer, the struggles of the Polish working class have continued in a subdued form under periodic threats of a Russian invasion. The strikes, notably the general strike led by the Inter-Factory Strike Committee (MKS) in the city of Gdansk, won significant economic and political concessions from the ruling bureaucracy. (For a Marxist analysis of the events leading up to the Gdansk Accords of August 31, see the special issue No. 10 of *Socialist Voice*.) But in the succeeding months, the workers' reformist leaders and the government have maneuvered back and forth trying to establish a new mode of class stability in the crisis-ridden country.

These maneuvers are almost universally portrayed in the West as a struggle between the forces of democracy and the forces of repression. "Repression" stands for the Polish regime and the Russian army behind it, and "democracy" means the *Solidarnosc* (Solidarity) trade union led by Lech Walesa, together with the Roman Catholic Church, the intellectuals and their supporters in the West. A single moment's reflection should make any critical observer suspicious of an interpretation that sees Ronald Reagan and the reactionary Pope as heralds of progress. Some leftists have taken this alignment to mean that the workers' struggle itself is wrong or even "counterrevolutionary." To cut our way through such confusionism requires a specific class analysis of the forces at work.

Take the role of the church, which holds the nominal allegiance of 90 percent of the Polish population. Everyone knows how workers' spokesmen like Lech Walesa and Anna Walentynowicz used the crucifix as their symbol and met publicly with the Pope, Cardinal Wyszynski and other Catholic politicians. Everyone knows of the pious sentiments expressed by the Polish Pope in support of the aspirations of "his brothers" at home. And so everyone has assumed that the church and the workers stand on the same side in the struggle against a repressive government. But if this is true, why did the government on November 21 appoint a leading Catholic politician as Deputy Prime Minister — in charge of family and social affairs, no less, a subject on which the Pope has notoriously oppressive views? Why did a church spokesman on December 12 denounce the opposition groups for endangering the country? These troubling questions have confused all the bourgeois commentators, who find no need to penetrate beneath the surface of events.

Polish State is Capitalist

The leftists who take sides against the workers' movement only turn the same confusion upside-down. For the bourgeois observers, the traditionally conservative church is expected to be hostile to a "communist" regime — and the leftists agree, differing only on which side to support. Their common fallacy is that there is something communist about the rulers of the so-called workers' states of Poland and Russia. On the contrary, as *Socialist Voice* has frequently argued, any state in which a proletariat exists and is exploited by an alien ruling class is capitalist, whatever the degree of state ownership of industry. And the rulers, despite their historical origin in the working class movement, are state capitalists, not communists.

When the Communist Parties were a proletarian revolutionary force in the late 1920's (and earlier, when socialist parties began to organize the working class for socialist revolution), the church held an openly hostile and even repressive stance. In many countries, including Poland, it lined up squarely behind militaristic and fascist regimes that crushed all attempts at working-class independence. Naturally, the church took a hostile view towards the seizure of state power in Eastern Europe in the late 1940's by the Communists. The fact that these parties were now dominated by the counterrevolutionary Stalinist regime in the USSR did not yet alter the church's attitude, since the property-owning church was tied to the rest of the traditional bourgeoisie which was ousted in the wake of the Soviet Army's occupation following the defeat of Germany.

The church was even persecuted by the new Stalinist regime, as were all opposition elements, especially those of the working class. But the Stalinists' attitude shifted after the 1956 working class uprisings in Poland and Hungary. Throughout Eastern Europe, Russian rule was shaken under the blows of the workers' revival. The underlying weakness of the Stalinist form of capitalism became evident, and the Russians were forced to make concessions to their satellite states. Having already eliminated the traditional bourgeois parties, they still tried to deal with every bourgeois force that held influence among the workers. In Poland this meant the church above all.

Church's Reactionary Tradition

The church, formerly hated by working-class militants and socialists, had been partially legitimized in their eyes by the regime's persecution. In addition, the government moved to win the support of the large Polish peasantry by restoring its right to own and farm small plots of land; and the peasants traditionally look to the church as their political defender. As a result, the regime struck a deal with the church in order to seek legitimacy and ideological support for itself (in which it granted the church the right to conduct religious education in state schools). The church, in turn, was willing to support the current rulers in preference to any genuinely socialist force emanating from the proletariat. The unholy alliance, forged in response to the workers' struggle in 1956, was cemented subsequently by the continuing class uprisings of 1970, 1976 and now 1980.

The church's reactionary politics, which are taken as evidence of its underlying opposition to the Polish Stalinist regime, frequently have brought it into outright anti-Semitic campaigns; church elements were noted for this during the pre-war Pilsudski regime. Since World War II, however, it has been the regime itself that has encouraged anti-Semitism — this filth has been a cause for church-state unity, not antagonism. The Stalinist state tolerated and welcomed the support of the right-wing Catholic group known as Pax led by Boleslaw Piasecki, a notorious anti-Semite and pro-fascist from the 1930's. The state itself has forced into exile nearly every remnant of Polish Jewry that survived Hitler. General Mieczyslaw Moczar, who recently rejoined the Polish Politburo, was responsible for the openly anti-Semitic campaign of

the 1960's.

There have been ups and downs in the unholy alliance since 1956, but the church played its role aptly during the 1980 strikes, the most massive of all. At the height of the August strike wave, the church called on the workers to go back to work. The workers paid no heed, but the Party leadership hailed the church's "stabilizing" role. Throughout the summer and autumn, the church reinforced the nationalist elements among the workers and in the petty-bourgeois opposition and thereby did its best to keep the workers' movement within reformist bounds. The December 12 statement, issued after a suitably pompous convocation, invoked the authority of the Pope and then declared: "It is forbidden to undertake actions that could raise the danger of a threat to the freedom and statehood of the fatherland." The government could not wish for anything stronger.



Russian troops and equipment, together with East European detachments, threaten Poland because of workers' upheaval. These "workers' states" inspire U.S. leftists but not workers there.

For such reasons, we wrote in *Socialist Voice* No. 10 that in Poland "the Church is a reactionary bastion of the ruling power." This analysis was specifically cited and challenged by the Spartacist League in the October 31 *Workers Vanguard*, who went on to credit us with "at least ... the virtue of an upside-down consistency in claiming that this state power is 'capitalist.'" And earlier the Spartacists had written that "the idea that the church (and Western bankers) are four-square behind the Soviet-bloc bureaucracy is a 'state cap' myth" (*Workers Vanguard*, September 19). The Spartacists allow for a "temporary coincidence of interests, perhaps," but insist that there is a fundamental class difference between capitalist businessmen and priests and the presumably proletarian Stalinists.

The Spartacists are partly right on one point: there is a link between a class analysis of Polish society and an understanding of the role of the church, and our view is certainly consistent.

But they are right on nothing else. For example, if the supposed class difference between church and state (really differences between different forms of capitalism) were the fundamental ones and the current "coincidence of interests" only temporary, the church would act differently. It would encourage the workers' confidence in the oppositionists, even if it occasionally criticized their tactics. It would, through its spokesmen outside of Poland, back up interventionist statements by right-wing warmongers in the West. It would not have made its recent ringing and unqualified statements of support to the regime and hostility to the more radical workers who are growing angry at Walesa's conservatism. And it would not have specifically chosen to criticize the statement attributed to a spokesman for KOR, the social-democratic opposition group, for reportedly believing that "opposition elements would try to gain power gradually, not immediately, out of fear of provoking Soviet intervention" (*New York Times*, December 13). Such a statement would coincide exactly with the church's supposedly fundamental views.

Spartacists Dispute Church Role

Nor are the Spartacists correct in suggesting that a state capitalist analysis requires us to imagine that the church stands "four-square" behind the Polish bureaucracy in the abjectly uncritical style typical of, say, the U.S. Communist Party. There are significant policy differences within the Eastern bloc ruling classes just as there are in the West, and the church as a rule is closely tied with the reformist wing of the Polish bureaucracy now led by Prime Minister Kania, the wing that prefers to allow some "democratic" accommodation to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals and the aristocratic layer of workers. (Nevertheless, the church also deals with the conservative, anti-Semitic bureaucratic wing when necessary.) Whatever its internal political preferences, the church does stand four-square behind the state when the latter is endangered by a working-class movement. It always tries to wield its influence with the backward workers to preserve the state's power. It prefers peaceful methods to outright suppression, but it backs the state against the workers, and that is fundamental.

Of course, the church hierarchy might really prefer to see a return to pre-war capitalism or, even better, to the medieval Dark Ages. Non-Marxist class forces *always* hold images of the world they wish to achieve which is at variance with their actual social role; if they did not, they would lose their own self-justification and their ability to hold a mass following. Early Protestants wished for a return to the feudal days of the church which was being corrupted by rising capitalism; instead, they furnished an ideological vehicle for capitalist revolutions. Today social-democrats and Stalinists in the West desire a socialist world but in practice join bourgeois parties that stand for the maintenance of capitalism. That is the role of the Polish church too. Marxists call these world views "false consciousness" or "ideologies." The Spartacists call them the truth. The material reality becomes "coincidence" and the ideology becomes determinant. Spartacism is Marxism upside-down — that is, idealism.

The church is indeed a bastion of the ruling Stalinist power. The Spartacists fail to perceive this because they too cannot support the Polish workers against their overlords. They see the possibility of "bourgeois counterrevolution" *coming from the workers' movement* because of its illusions in the church; they refuse to recognize the fundamental fact that the Polish state, far more than the workers, depends on the church for support.

For all its ideological hostility to the church, the Spartacist League finds itself in agreement with Wojtyla and Co. in its staunch defense of the ruling class in Poland. When it comes to a choice between the workers, whom they accuse of "demanding the biggest free lunch the world has ever seen" (*Workers Vanguard*, September 5; cited in *Socialist Voice* No. 10, p. 12), and the "deformed workers' state," the Spartacists choose the bosses. In reality, it is not the church that the Spartacists reject but the workers' demands.

The Polish workers are learning in the course of their struggle that the church's deeds speak louder than its ideological pretensions to be concerned for "democracy" and popular welfare. They will learn as well that the pretensions of various phony socialists from KOR to Spartacism are equally misleading.

While the Spartacists' support to the ruling Stalinists is obvious but unacknowledged, the Workers World Party is more open. The WWP refers to the "so-called 'workers' movement" and openly encourages a Russian invasion to preserve Poland's "socialist" characteristics. Its main justification for this position is again the role of the church: the church is counterrevolutionary, so anyone allied with it is too. As for the mounting evidence that church and government stand together, the WWP dismisses it with the claim that the church is only conspiring to gain time for a peaceful counterrevolution without the threat of Russian troops. If this were true, the ruling wing of the government, allied with the church, would also be counterrevolutionary. Only the Russian Stalinists and their Polish allies would be "revolutionary." Such a conception amounts, as we will show, to support for world capitalism against proletarian revolution.

For one thing, the church is not acting alone. Granting that it does in part reflect the aspirations of Western imperialism in Poland, it still stands for the preservation of stability against working-class explosions — the common policy of Moscow and Washington in Eastern Europe and everywhere else. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser who is known for advocating a tough anti-"communist" stance against Russia, made a point of stating in December, when the threat of a Russian invasion was much in the news: "No one is interested in upsetting the existing international arrangements or threatening the legitimate security interests of any party" (*New York Times*, December 5). That is, the agreements signed at the end of the Second World War at Yalta (and recently reinforced at Helsinki) are still operative. These deals gave the Russian imperialists control over Eastern Europe, including Poland. They were cemented further when President Lyndon Johnson gave Russia a free hand in Czechoslovakia in 1968, as President Eisenhower had done in Hungary in 1956. The Western imperialists will talk tough but leave "existing international arrangements" alone.

Western Capitalists Praise Walesa

Brzezinski also said that "my expectation and certainly hope is that all of the parties in and around Poland will exercise restraint, moderation and compromise." That was directed not only at the Russian and East German armies on Poland's borders but also — in fact primarily — at the workers' leaders. Workers' rebellions in Eastern Europe make great propaganda for the West but also dangerous instability. And the reformist leaders follow the same line. "I call on Poles to take full responsibility for the fate of our country. I call on them to maintain peace and order, to show reason and common sense and watch over the country's security and sovereignty," said

Lech Walesa, speaking at the important rally in Gdansk in December commemorating the shipyard workers murdered by government troops in 1970 (*Washington Post*, December 17).

Walesa, Kania, Wojtyla, Wyszynski and Brzezinski stand shoulder to shoulder, warning the Polish workers to restrain themselves. Not only because of the Russian threat, as *Workers World* would have it, but because the Stalinist state is desperately weak and needs all the help it can get. The economy is in shambles (industrial growth was negative in 1979 and obviously no better in 1980; the debt to the West is now reported as \$23 billion), and the popularity of *Solidarnosc* (it now has 8 million members, or three-quarters of the work force!) shows that the organized workers could shut down the economy at will. And if they can do that, why stop short of overthrowing the government? The possibility of a working-class revolution looms in every bourgeois mind, so the workers must be urged to show restraint. *Business Week* magazine (January 12), a voice of American capitalism, joined the chorus praising Walesa's extraordinary moderation and "responsibility," and sighed with relief that "the strike fever is fading."

Reformists Favor Decentralization

The consensus even extends as far as Moscow. When the Russian propagandists complain about "anti-socialist forces" running amok in Poland, it is not the church that they are afraid of, but the workers. The threat of military invasion is the major weapon the Russians have, but they are not eager to use it. Using troops to suppress the workers would meet with armed resistance, undoubtedly a general strike throughout Poland and the probability of working-class unrest elsewhere in Eastern Europe. As well, Western and Japanese capitalists would almost certainly have to break off, or at least reduce, the profitable economic collaboration that the Russians depend on to modernize their industry. Neither Washington nor Moscow looks forward to this. So the Russian rulers too denounce "provocative demands" by Polish workers which "would lead to further dislocations within the Polish economy and to increasing tensions in the domestic market" (Tass report quoted in the January 2 *New York Times*). The tone is different from that of *Business Week* and Brzezinski, but the content is the same.

There is one difference between the Russian rulers and their fellow law-and-order advocates. The church, the Western bankers and the Polish reformists under the threat of the masses now speak of the need for "democratization" of the regime — as did Gierek before them in response to earlier workers' unrest. Straitjacketed by a collapsing economy and fearful of any input by the workers, they seek ways to open up Poland to market forces even more than at present. This is not counterrevolution, since the country is already capitalist. It is a recognition that a certain devolutionary tendency is necessary if the inefficient and brittle state capitalist economies can even hope to remain viable. This means more joint enterprises with the West and further interpenetration with the world market and banking system.

This development is linked to a critical point we have made before (unique to our theory of state capitalism and opposed to the anti-Marxist alternatives): the tendency toward devolution is inevitable. Nationalized property in the major means of production is a proletarian form whose progressive social content can be achieved only under a workers' state; under capitalism it clashes with the law of value that governs the state capitalist bloc just as it does the West. Nationalized

property can act as a prop for the law of value in the short run, but they inevitably collide over time. Hence the conflict between public and private sectors in the West and the push toward decentralization in the East. This does not mean re-privatization so much as more leeway for competition. It also means decentralization on an international scale, a decline in Russian domination of the Eastern bloc. Hence Russia's objection. But the tendency toward devolution operates in Russia as well, even if more slowly than in the staellites.

The trend towards devolution under Stalinism is inevitable, but there is a built-in contradiction. The workers, at the start of a struggle, are frequently lured by the reformists' ideas of decentralization and anarchistic pluralism, falsely called democracy, because they want the Stalinist dictatorship off their backs. This is dangerous for the rulers, reformists and conservatives alike, because in the course of struggle the workers are nevertheless liable to recognize the need for central control over the economy in order to reorient production and trade *in the interest of the working class*. The tendency of the proletarian struggle eventually asserts itself *against* devolution in favor of their own centralized state.

Russian invasion last fall!) can ritualistically denounce Stalinism but are being forced by their politics into a similar position.

Polish Struggle Continues

In periods of deep working class unrest, the devolutionary tendency of the Stalinist economies runs into the extreme danger of proletarian socialist revolution. Under the surface that is what is occurring in Poland today. That is why the Walesa's, the church and KOR in their own ways are increasingly anxious to see the process slow down; they are looking for a deal with the state. That is why the state reformers around Kania will never break fundamentally with the reactionaries, and why Moscow will not let them go too far. All wings of capitalism feel the material need to join together against the workers (even if their particular interests and rivalries don't permit them to) in the face of potential proletarian revolution.

The Polish class struggle will continue in militant fashion



Left: Polish workers debasing themselves before the Church. Right: Lech Walesa and Cardinal Wyszyński in smiling chat. U.S. leftists who condemn Polish workers because of Church find themselves in political agreement with the Church, which is openly supporting the state.

Concretely, the workers will oppose the devolutionary tendency especially when it becomes obvious that it will mean the appearance of the traditional crises of capitalism, notably mass unemployment and rampant inflation. They will have nothing in common with the oppositional conservative wing of the bureaucracy, which can only turn to the Stalinist alternative, the tightening of police measures to discipline the workers when economic forces like unemployment are unavailable. "Leftists" like Workers World, who counterpose Russian "socialism" to the "counterrevolution" of the reformists and the church, therefore stand only for a decaying form of state capitalism dependent on mass repression. Their more confused cousins in the Spartacist League (who did not know what line they would take when questioned about a possible

despite the urgings of Walesa and Co. because the capitalist crisis offers the workers no alternative but to defend their livelihoods. Tremendous gains have already been won, above all the creation of the Gdansk MKS, a genuine workers' soviet that in its organizational form already raised the question of workers' power. Advancing the struggle means that the subjective factor, the workers' political consciousness, can develop to the extent that the objective factors already have. The possibility of creating a revolutionary, genuinely communist party lies along this road. A Russian invasion would be aimed at crushing such developments in the bud. In this light, the position of "leftists" who support or apologize for the Russian military will be nothing but criminal betrayal of the working class and socialism. ■

Klan

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decaying capitalist system which cannot provide jobs, a decent income or a bearable way of life for millions of people. Unless capitalism is eliminated, depression, fascism and world war are inevitable.

It is no accident that fascism is gaining ground again in Europe, Latin America and to a lesser extent in the United States. The temporary prosperity bubble of the post-World War II years is gone forever, and many are beginning to realize that their hopes for a better life are shattered. Fascism seeks to win over elements of the middle classes, unemployed and working class by falsely presenting itself as a radical, even revolutionary, alternative to the present system. As conditions worsen, the big capitalists will throw their support to the fascists (a few already have done so) in order to obtain shock troops to crush the workers and the unions. The chief purpose of a future fascist regime will be to force the workers to work harder for less to restore prosperity for the bourgeoisie.

The fascist message finds ready listeners when it proclaims the hopelessness of liberal democratic capitalism. It claims that the economic havoc is due not to the laws of capital but to the evil machinations of international bankers, Wall Street, Jews, Arabs (for some), unions and foreign communists along with their agents at home. This conspiracy controls the system which has given everything to the blacks and Latins at the expense of white workers, petty bourgeois and unemployed. In America, the victorious Nazi or Klan revolution promises to return the country to white Americans if they are willing to fight.

Historically, when fascism triumphed in several countries in the 1930's, it was able to pass itself off as a radical alternative only because the big left parties based in the working classes offered no way out of the Great Depression. These parties sought to prop up the shaky framework of capitalism by keeping the "democratic" bourgeoisie in power. They did this through Popular Fronts — political blocs with bourgeois liberals that tied the workers to the bourgeois program and suppressed working class action that might endanger the alliance. Their failure to fight to overthrow capitalism is what drove desperate plebeians into the arms of the fascists. Today the past is trying to repeat itself.

During the years of relative prosperity, the same left parties tended to thrive, basing their growth on spreading the illusion of an ever-expanding horizon of better jobs, good times and even a pathway into the upper levels of the middle class. In one country the traditional left was liberal, in another social-democratic, in yet another, "Communist." But the message was everywhere the same: capitalism can be made to work through increased government activity and a myriad of reforms. And in a country like the U.S., because American imperialism after the war milked the world, benefits could be relatively large. But here as elsewhere the temporary benefits the workers got were concessions to buy off their struggle.

After all, the bourgeoisie did not want to return to the near-revolutionary struggles of the thirties that produced the mass industrial unions of the CIO. The labor leaderships by the end of the war allowed the unions to be increasingly incorporated into the state machinery so as to cement their own bureaucratic hold over the ranks. The bureaucrats, not the workers, gained a fundamental stake in capitalism as brokers for the workers' labor power. As long as there were gains being

won, the better off, skilled and high seniority workers continued to support the bureaucrats. They all went along with liberal reform capitalism which reflected their own material outlook.

The labor aristocracy was not the only layer affected. The prosperity quickened the hopes of American blacks, other minorities and poorer whites to break the grip of subjugation. Especially after the ghetto eruptions of the 1960's, the capitalists were forced to give limited concessions to the powerful black movement. School integration through busing schemes, jobs through affirmative action programs and education through open admissions and quota policies were all promised.

While capitalism did not fulfill most of its promises even during prosperity, it did furnish benefits for a small middle layer of blacks — and offered false hopes to millions more. The boom ended in the late sixties. Illusions were smashed among both blacks and whites. The tide of liberalism receded, and sections of the petty bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy have now turned to Reagan. The extreme right wing of these layers has found its way into the periphery of the Nazis and the Klan. The hard cadre of these groups is formed by the most socially alienated elements, including packs of white lumpenproletarian bully boys and cops.

But large numbers are also polarizing in a leftward direction. The Miami revolt was the best known of several black uprisings against the wave of racist and cop murders. After yet another flurry of racist killings in Buffalo, one angry resident talked about his fellow blacks to a *New York Times* reporter (January 3): "They say they are just biding their time but you can oppress people only so long before they react. And that may happen before too long around here."

Reformists Open Road to Fascism

The material conditions of today are beginning to be reminiscent of the thirties, and these objective factors are again generating the seeds of fascism. Likewise, the leftist descendants of the parties that betrayed the working classes in the past are starting down the same road. One of the largest and fastest growing groups, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, openly advocates a Popular Front-type coalition of liberals, trade unionists and minorities within the capitalist Democratic Party to reform the system — in the vain hope that liberal capitalism can stop fascist growth. It provides a nominally socialist cover for left-talking labor bureaucrats (and lately even some Democratic politicians) to carry out the bureaucrats' traditional class collaboration.

Whereas DSOC is conscious of its attempt to coalesce with the left labor bureaucrats, the subjectively revolutionary groups deny any such thing in theory in order to accomplish it in practice. For the most moderate of them, the Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party (who are more and more indistinguishable on programmatic grounds), the clearest evidence is their utterly pacifistic response to the fascists. They steadfastly abjure every attempt at armed self-defense by the oppressed against racist violence, for if there is anything the labor bureaucrats hate it is force wielded by the masses.

An elementary Marxist principle is to avoid sowing illusions among the masses in the ability or willingness of the bourgeois state to defend them against reaction. State violence will inevitably be used against the working class, not the right. Yet the SWP has a long history of beseeching federal troops to

defend blacks. In the wake of the Greensboro decision, the SWP's *Militant* (November 28) demanded that the government start a "dragnet of Klan and right-wing groups — including the armed training camps they boast of — to question them on suspicion of murder in the spate of Black assassinations across the country." It also called for "federal prosecution of the North Carolina Klan-Nazi murderers and of the cops who have gone free after killing Blacks in Miami, New Orleans, Indianapolis and other cities."

The effect of this position is to divide fascism from its underlying links to the capitalist state and to capitalism in general. This fits in with the popular front assumption that a political agreement between the liberal capitalists and the workers will defeat fascism. But in reality fascism is the last stronghold of capitalism, and the bourgeoisie has no intention of destroying it and therefore itself.

The farther left groups are less open in their capitulation. A few, like the Communist Workers Party (CWP) and the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), are devotees of fiery rhetoric and violent clashes with the KKK. But in practice they reveal themselves to have great similarities with their more moderately spoken colleagues.

Consider a revealing polemic penned by the Maoist CWP in the July 5, 1980 *Workers Viewpoint* against the RSL, which it mistakenly identifies with Trotskyism. Insofar as it deals with Trotsky, the polemic mutilates quotations and falsifies his views with breathtaking abandon. It accuses both Trotsky and the RSL of "seeing fascists as a petty-bourgeois movement independent of the state and the direction of the monopoly capitalists." This has no relevance to Trotsky, who frequently exposed the intertwined relationship among the bourgeoisie, its state and the petty-bourgeois fascists. But the CWP nails the RSL by jeering at its strategy of incessant calls for small bands of leftists to "Smash the Klan" everywhere it shows up.

If the RSL really understood that the fascists are tied to the capitalist state, it would have to be more tactically selective since it is in no position now to take on the police everywhere.

The RSL never replied to the CWP's attack because doing so would force it to acknowledge its Trotskyist past and defend the Trotskyism it has abandoned. If it were Trotskyist, it would have to adopt a strategy that exposes by its very practice the connection between the cops and the Nazis. The left groups do not alone have the strength to annihilate the KKK, especially given its state protection. The RSL's strategy, like the SWP's, separates fascism from capitalism as a whole and thereby paves the way for a popular front coalition with liberals against the fascists. Genuine revolutionaries point out the necessity of mass armed *self-defense* against the racist and fascist attacks, not indiscriminate fights. The attacks of the Klan can be defended against. As the masses gain confidence through their struggle, a real *offensive* answer to the Klan will be on the agenda. That means a revolutionary movement to smash the capitalist state.

The CWP's criticisms of the RSL come not from a real understanding of the developing relationship between the bourgeoisie and the fascists but from the assertion that they are identical, that the bourgeois state today is fascist. The effect of this is to dampen people's fear of real fascism if fascism is what we have now. And the CWP too has engaged in adventurous clashes — its "Death to the Klan" rallies that ignore the need for defensive slogans to rally masses of people and its attack on the cops at the Democratic Party convention in New York are only examples. It is no wonder that, after all these "revolutionary actions" failed to build the CWP to the massive proportions it predicted, it adopted a central strategy of building united coalitions on the broadest reformist terms. The CWP played a leading role in the December 5-6 con-

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The following motion was submitted by an LRP supporter to Local 384 of District Council 37 in New York City of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers (AFSCME). It was passed overwhelmingly by the local but still awaits action by the DC 37 Delegate Assembly. Despite the union officials' lack of interest, the vote for our motion — given its openly communist motivation — indicates the workers' desire to protest the Klan murderers' exoneration.

MOTION

Whereas the vicious killings by the KKK and Nazis in Greensboro are an attack on the labor movement and oppressed peoples, it is resolved that this union, Local 384, call upon the Delegate Assembly of DC 37 to demand that Gotbaum, as President of the Municipal Labor Council, call upon The New York Central Labor Council to organize a mass anti-Nazi and anti-KKK demonstration protesting the release of these murderers.

Further, in the event that the NYC CLC refuses or delays taking action, that DC 37 call its own demonstration inviting these unions to participate. This demonstration protesting the release of these murderers. today.

MOTIVATION

On November 17, the capitalist state gave its seal of approval to the murder of 5 members of the Communist

Workers Party in Greensboro, North Carolina by the KKK and the Nazis. The monstrous "not guilty" verdict in effect declared open season for fascist killings of blacks, communists and other workers and oppressed. Not accidentally it came in the midst of a barbaric wave of mutilations and murder directed towards blacks throughout the country.

It is fitting that the Greensboro decision was perfectly legal. It was the product of a "fair trial," itself a part of "our whole democratic system of justice." It is the most vivid proof, written in the blood of its martyred victims, of the communist contention that there is no "fairness," no "justice," and no "democracy" for us from the capitalist state. It is their state that owns "our country" and it is fair only to the rich, the racists and the reactionaries.

These attacks on oppressed minorities can be expected to continue and intensify, aided by the racist and anti-working class rhetoric of Koch and Reagan. While the fascists' attacks have thus far been directed at minorities and communists, the fascist program for strengthening the capitalist state demands smashing the mass working class organizations. As the fascist organizations grow, their attacks will become bolder and more explicit. The trade unions must be prepared to fight the violent attacks that are inherent in the growth of fascism through armed self-defense. We call on every worker who wants to fight the fascist attack to support our demand that the unions take up this struggle. The working class must be mobilized now to meet this growing danger. ■

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ference in Greensboro to organize a "national anti-fascist-type of people's organization," a conference that swallowed the petty-bourgeois pacifists' demand that it not stand for the right of armed self-defense by blacks and working people. This was the inevitable consequence of the CWP's assertion that fascism is the weapon of the big bourgeoisie — hence political blocs (not just temporary agreements for joint actions) with every sort of petty-bourgeois lawyer and bureaucrat are plausible. Once again the left has found a route to popular frontism, and the workers' needs have been subordinated to the petty-bourgeois alliance. The counter-inauguration march on January 20 that resulted from this conference was a pitiful affair that mobilized few people. It went far beyond even popular front politics to create a bloc on liberal capitalist terms. It paraded under the banner "Human Rights at Home and Abroad," a slogan totally identified with Jimmy Carter and his policies — which have helped, not hurt, reaction.

In the trade unions where the CWP has supporters, it has not tried to expose the bureaucrats' failure to mobilize workers against Nazi and Klan outrages. Especially after the vicious Greensboro verdict last fall, many workers were eager to find ways to express their anger (see box). But the CWP has a long-term policy of not confronting the union bureaucrats in their bailiwicks (*Socialist Action* of August 1980 has specifics). This policy, once ultra-leftist, now meshes perfectly with its new popular frontist blocs. The leftish union bureaucrats will have no difficulty joining such alliances — if they get off the ground and really prove that they can muzzle militant mass action by workers.

One left group that seems to stay away from popular front coalitions is the Spartacist League, but this too is deceptive. The SL prides itself on its leadership of the November 10, 1979 rally against the Klan in Detroit. Such a rally could have been called simply on an action basis: "Stop the Klan." The several hundred black workers who participated did so for that reason, not any particular set of reform demands. A revolutionary organization would have put forward its Marxist program in its own name, offering for example, an open microphone to other workers to express their own views. Instead the SL raised its own version of a left bureaucrat's program (*Workers Vanguard* supplement, November 16, 1979). It called for "the right of Southern black armed self-

defense," a slogan that makes sense only for the purpose of attracting Northern labor bureaucrats who want to keep the black struggle under their domination in their part of the country. It advocated "independent black and labor candidates against the Democratic Party" and a "workers party," without specifying that the only political solution for the fight against fascism is a revolutionary communist party. Nor was there any warning against relying on the state, the favorite tactic of labor leaders. And for all of its attacks on others for relying on the bourgeois state to defeat the Klan, the Spartacists repeatedly urge the state to "Jail the KKK-Nazi Killers!"

The reformist programs of all the wings of petty-bourgeois leftism are no answer to Nazism, since capitalism is itself the seedbed of fascism. The labor bureaucracy and the reformist and centrist "socialists" who are tailing after its left wing seek to restore an unrestorable period of capitalist liberalism. Many people are already very doubtful that the system can grant the left's promised reforms, and in this sense they are far smarter than the supposed Marxists.

The critical problem is the lack of a mass movement, and there is no magic "left" gimmick to create one. Consequently the fascists cannot be wiped out now. That is the hard reality. Adventurous acts by tiny left blocs showed that they cannot electrify the masses into motion; political adaptation to the bureaucrats will be no more successful.

The capitalist crisis and the right-wing attacks are intensifying. The masses will respond and be ready to fight as they have done in the past. It is necessary now to relentlessly expose the bureaucracy so that the struggle is not choked off again. Without a mass movement, such exposure is generally propagandistic. However, recent events like those in Miami, Atlanta, Buffalo, Detroit and New York have shown the rising anger of sections of workers and blacks. This gives revolutionaries the opportunity to demand union participation in united actions against racism and fascism.

Inevitably such actions will expose the reformist bureaucracy. They are counterposed to *political blocs* with the bureaucrats on outright reformist programs, which reinforce the tattered credibility of these elements — who stand as a barrier to the creation of a revolutionary communist alternative leadership. Left-minded workers have a choice between two strategies to fight fascism: reform or revolution. ■



At the funeral procession protesting the murder of 5 CWPers in Greensboro, N.C. in 1979, the police allowed only unloaded guns to be carried. When "only" the cops are armed, the KKK is armed too. Winning the support of liberals and union leaders by surrendering armed self-defense demands doesn't build a movement but allows it to be killed.

Is the Working Class Conservative?

November 10, 1980

To: League for the Revolutionary Party
Listen!

At a time in our country when a Ronald Reagan, along with his entire right-wing cohorts, can be elected into office, signaling not just fear on the part of the masses but political backwardness, your group comes out as always with anti-capitalist propaganda exhorting the workers to unite. Revolutionary bullshit. When I read your leaflet against Mt. Sinai Hospital management as well as union management, my reaction was not to attend the rally. I wonder how many other people you've turned off? I'm going to the rally but that's not the point.

A revolutionary organization that doesn't know when it's time to go underground or to use disguise as basic strategy and tactics are revolutionary fools.

I'm mad as hell! For years I've wanted to participate in a left-wing worker-oriented organization. But I'm a worker, with full stake in my job. I have mouths to feed, rent and other bills to pay and a reputation to uphold so that if I leave my job for some reason I can get it back. Who wants a known revolutionary?

I can't be part of a group whose prestige is so important that they must scream revolutionary ideology — make themselves targets for attack by workers as well as management. Workers are not at the point where they can say or feel that they want revolution even if they do. Therefore, even if the cause is just they are not about to align themselves with a group who outrageously calls themselves a Revolutionary Party and throws around terms like Socialism. We have to be taught in our everyday language what is wrong with the system. We have to use our everyday language to construct or accept a new system. Ronald Reagan got elected not because he talked of the glories of being right wing. The fact that he was Republican was played down.

When I see that I can work for the left again I will. Now I'm venting frustration that you people are probably too self-righteous to look at.

— A worker who wants to join the Party
without being branded.

LRP Reply

We are publishing the above letter because it reflects attitudes rife among both working-class and middle-class leftists. It also contains a calculated political strategy dangerously widespread on the left and based upon the utmost contempt for the working class, which is already plagued by fears and problems stemming from the economic crisis. It is therefore important for us to reply.

But first we have to outline the specific events and LRP actions that stimulated our nameless correspondent to write the letter. In April 1980, Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City imposed an absenteeism policy on its workers which sharply curtailed the use of sick days granted by the union contract with District 1199. After a protest by workers at the hospital president's office, a long-time militant, Peter Sawits, was arrested and fired (see the May 1980 Special Issue of *Socialist Action*). To date, the new sick policy is still in effect and Sawits is still off the job.

At Mt. Sinai, the LRP has campaigned for a strategy to

reinstate Sawits and defeat the sick policy. We issued a series of leaflets which, while addressing the immediate attack on the workers, also pointed to the need to halt the whole range of attacks by the bourgeoisie in the present period. In this as in other trade union interventions, we sharply counterposed our revolutionary program to the reformism of the union bureaucrats while demanding that the officials in power lead actions to defend the workers.

In carrying out this strategy, an LRP supporter raised a motion at an 1199 Delegate Assembly last September mandating the union heads to organize a demonstration at the hospital. The motion passed overwhelmingly. But the bureaucrats did nothing for five months, and then allowed their own factional disputes to set back the Mt. Sinai defense. At the hospital, the demonstration on November 10 was endorsed by Guild Division officials (as the above motion required) but actively sabotaged by those from the Hospital Division (which represents the "blue collar" jobs while the Guild includes the office and technical workers). Neither wing of the bureaucracy did anything to build for the demonstration.

Bureaucrats Stifle Workers

This of course is not the first time that the 1199 bureaucrats have handcuffed the workers. They have divided and abandoned strikes, allowed scabbing, led continued retreats on working conditions, accepted wholesale closings and layoffs and swallowed unbelievable contracts. They have reduced what was once a militant fighting workforce to a state of demoralization. For this reason plus the recent bureaucratic infighting, the demonstration turned out to be small.

Since the demonstration, the bureaucrats have "reunited" around a formal position that opposes the sick policy. But they now claim that no further actions can be called until the membership is more militant and united. The bureaucrats and their conservative supporters among the union delegates blame the rest of the workforce for the backward consciousness which they have worked overtime to propagate. The alternative point of view was summarized by us in our leaflet distributed on November 10 to build for the demonstration:

"The LRP recognizes that the entire union bureaucracy is responsible for holding back the struggle of workers against the capitalist class. Through our participation in union struggles we hope to convince fellow workers of the need to oust the bureaucracy and build a revolutionary party leadership. And in order to break workers from the feelings of isolation and weakness that the bureaucracy fosters, we also campaign in the unions and other arenas for a general strike.

A general strike would accomplish far more than any single struggle at Mt. Sinai or 1199 as a whole. By shutting down production, it could force the bosses to halt the hospital closings, layoffs, and cutbacks. In addition to winning such immediate gains, the power of a general strike would show many workers the possibility of a permanent victory against capitalism: the socialist alternative."

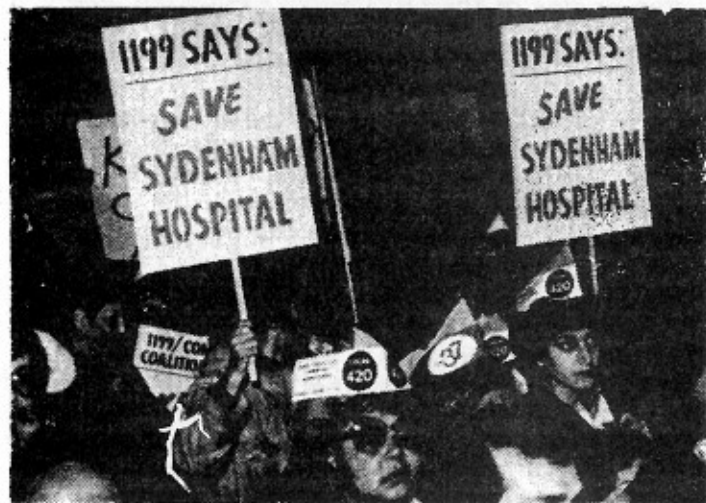
It is this leaflet that our correspondent objected to. The writer's case, put briefly, is that Reagan's election shows that the masses are not just fearful but also politically backward. Therefore the LRP's anti-capitalist and revolutionary exhortations to unite are absurd. Our extremism seems even

worse to the writer because of her (his?) concerns over unemployment, retaliation by the bosses and hostility by fellow workers.

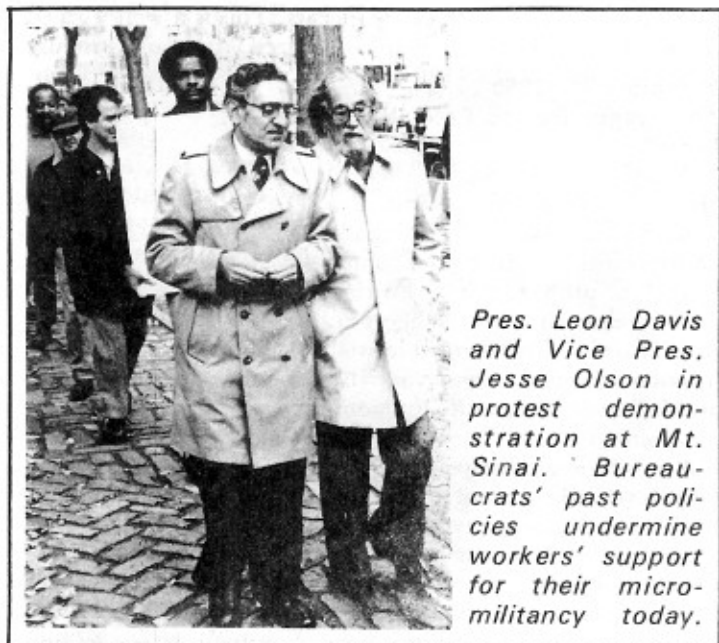
Contrary to the hopes of leftists, the U.S. working class not only has not made the revolution but has been on the retreat, surrendering gains won through past struggles. This has led many leftists, including our correspondent, to develop a tremendous contempt for workers (even self-contempt, if the leftist is a worker). They say that the workers are unable to understand anything beyond the immediate horizon. If socialism is to be achieved it will have to be sugarcoated and presented in ordinary language, not verbal hammers and sickles — made simple so that the workers' backward minds can grasp it. Above all, don't tell them the truth. After all, Reagan lied and won by doing so, as the writer informs us.

What garbage! All capitalist politicians lie — they have no other choice. Shall we expect them to openly advocate exploitation, imperialist slaughter, unemployment, inflation and all the other genuine attributes of the capitalism they speak for? Of course not. But working-class politics must be exactly the opposite. We have to tell the truth about the capitalist system and our political ideas, not out of moral rectitude or to boost our egos but because socialism will be achieved only by a working class conscious of how the capitalist world operates and how the system can be overcome. Moreover, workers are extremely cynical about all politicians, including Reagan. Workers aren't stupid; they know all of them lie, something our correspondent is too contemptuous to appreciate.

Our correspondent calls the workers backward for not seeing through Reagan's fake moderation; it is from this that she deduces the workers' hatred of extremism and their opposition to the LRP's open talk of socialism. But those workers who voted for Reagan did not do so in the expectation that he would be moderate — they were looking for a change from failed liberalism, and that is what Reagan promised. For many workers who had voted Democratic all their lives this vote was in effect jumping to an extreme. Nearly half the electorate didn't vote at all because they saw no sharp alternative to their present condition being offered. It is obvious that the U.S. is at the beginning of a political polarization process in which many workers, including both non-voters and Reagan voters, are searching for ways out of the crisis.



1199 leaders gave token support to fight against closure of DC 37-organized hospital. Bureaucrats' policies lead to workers' sense of weakness.



Pres. Leon Davis and Vice Pres. Jesse Olson in protest demonstration at Mt. Sinai. Bureaucrats' past policies undermine workers' support for their micro-militancy today.

On the one hand, the Nazis and the Klan are growing — a development we analyze elsewhere in this issue. These creeps don't hesitate to use terms like "revolution" and call their groups "socialist" — all lies, of course, but very appealing to desperate people ground down by capitalism.

On the other hand, there were mass uprisings last summer in Miami and other cities by black workers and unemployed people. Does the writer believe that she and her fellow unbranded leftists can reach these fighters with a message of moderation and disguise? It would be absurd to try. People need something worth fighting for, not pap. That is why we freely talk of socialism, but we don't talk only of the future. We also show how working people can fight today and win.

That is why we advocated a general strike in the November 10 leaflet, as we have done many times before that. In the past period, powerful unions such as the transit workers have lost important struggles because of a reformist misleadership which purposely keeps their struggles isolated. Is it any wonder that the workers fear to take action when the bureaucrats constantly divide and weaken them? With Reagan in power the possibility of begging the government for sops — the bureaucrats' favorite game — is even more doomed than in the past. Can any strategy besides a general strike turn around the present unfavorable balance of forces. Is there any other way for workers to discover their real strength in unity? Should we not point out what a general strike — of all workers, union and non-union, black and white, of all political beliefs — can achieve? Is proposing such unity "revolutionary bullshit" or a crying necessity? Any genuine leftist should know the answer. And if we know it, to hide it is a betrayal.

The writer contends that it was our leaflet, our open identification as communists, that prevented the workers' from uniting in the November 10 demonstration at Mt. Sinai. Every shred of evidence points to the contrary! It was the LRP, with our tiny forces there, that proposed, fought for and publicized the demonstration, the first union-sponsored action at Mt. Sinai in years. The bureaucrats in power, capable of organizing a full-scale mobilization, disdained to do so. Any criticism for the failure of the demonstration must be sent to their address.

By blaming revolutionaries for the workers' disunity and blithely ignoring the bureaucrats' sabotage of the rally, our correspondent, consciously or unconsciously, is playing the

role of an apologist for the bureaucrats. This is a well-worked field on the left. There are many organized left groups who use similar arguments. In 1999 there are members of the Communist Party, closely aligned with the bureaucrats. They too say that the workers are backward and that caution must be kept in order not to alienate them. These "leftists" even supported the 1980 contract sellout by 1999 president Leon Davis rather than stand apart from the majority of workers who "accepted" it. More precisely, the CPers do not wish to alienate the bureaucrats they are so busy tailing.

Throughout the unions there are left groups who pursue the writer's strategy of hiding their socialist conceptions. In fact, we will give away one of the worst-kept secrets on the left: if a group of plain, ordinary "rank and file" workers organizes in some union, the chances are that some "revolutionary socialist" or other was instrumental in setting it up. Not only do the hidden leftists not talk of socialism — when they do get power in a union, as some have done, they act very much like the non-socialist bureaucrats they replace. The bureaucrats, old-style and new, betray the workers not because they are Satanic but because there is no other course if they have built a movement which does not reject capitalism. In trying to fool the workers they fool themselves as well. Like our correspondent, underneath they think they are socialist but they won't say so. They won't act so either.

Our course is totally different. Unlike the leftists who try to manipulate the workers out of contempt, we understand the reality that has led workers to be frightened and feel powerless. We too are workers, many of us have children, all of us depend on our jobs, and we share these fears. But we know that the only way to protect ourselves is through the class struggle against the system that creates the fears. We have to communicate this to our fellow workers. Hiding won't do it. Because we respect them we tell them openly: "You are wrong, so wrong that if you continue on your present course the consequences will be far worse than those you fear now." The leftists who disguise themselves and deny the relevance of their own alternative only confirm the workers' caution.

If the workers succumb to their own fears and to the teachings of the unbranded leftists, this will only lower their confidence and raise that of the bosses and the right. Far greater than the danger of working class action is the danger of inaction. It is the capitalist crisis, not the left, that forces the bourgeoisie to go on the attack. Without working class resistance the repression will only get worse. While the workers remain passive any militant, anyone who talks back to the bosses, not just open revolutionaries, will be risking her job.

If leftists today are so scared off by Reagan that they fail to take advantage of every possibility of remaining open, they will miss the opportunity of preventing the far worse repression that capitalism has in store. How will such people act then? It may well be necessary for the left at some point to accept an underground political existence. Even then, it doesn't mean hiding our politics from the working class. It means burying ourselves in the workers' organizations and trusting our fellow workers to protect us — because they know we have never lied to them and that we are proven fighters for our common goals.

However, we do not accept the writer's assumption that all is lost today. The majority of workers are politically backward in the sense that they do not agree with Marxism and are not engaged in a mass political struggle today. But not all workers are the same. While we participate in mass actions planned for all workers as at Mt. Sinai, our primary efforts are aimed at presenting Marxist ideas to the minority of workers who are already open to socialism and revolution. Our most important

task is to build the nucleus of a future revolutionary party, a workers' leadership counterposed to the pro-capitalist bureaucrats and the pro-bureaucrat "leftists," so that the mass of workers will see a real alternative.

Workers are not simple-minded. A scientific, Marxist strategy to achieve socialism is not easy to work out. No sane worker would think it was. Anybody interested in making a machine, tinkering with a car, planning strategy for a football team, etc., knows that a technical vocabulary and a period of study are crucial. Does overthrowing capitalism require any less? Obviously it takes far more: not just scientific terminology, but a serious study of the history of the workers' movement in many countries and the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and other communist writers — all of whom wrote for workers who wanted to know the truth and weren't offended by forthright language.

Certain layers of workers who see more quickly than others the need to destroy capitalism will put in the effort now. Greater numbers will come to revolutionary conclusions as a result of life experience later on. But in no case will they leave all the thinking to a self-appointed elite that reserves to itself the right to use Marxist terms like "masses" and "political backwardness" — as does our correspondent, who objects to such language for the masses.

No strategy for socialism can be built upon fear, as our correspondent would like — even though it is true that conditions today give workers the right to be fearful. The very joining of an organization takes a minimum of courage. In other countries right now it means facing torture and execution. But in the U.S. it demands only the elementary conviction that a workers' revolutionary party is the only way to prevent worse dangers than those we face now. When workers see that they have a genuine alternative they will fight and make superhuman sacrifices as they have so often in the past. Given the opportunity, the vast majority of workers will fight if the goal is worthwhile, and the most advanced will join the revolutionary party. All will regard with deserved contempt those tendencies whose political outlook is based on contempt for the working class as a whole. ■

Key Articles in Back Issues

- No. 1: The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party (on the origins of the LRP).
- No. 2: Capitalism in the Soviet Union (including a polemic against Ernest Mandel's degenerated workers' state theory).
- No. 3: The Class Nature of the Communist Parties.
- No. 4: The "Marxism" of the Petty Bourgeoisie — the Spartacist League and the Theory of State Capitalism.
- No. 5: U.S. Labor and the Left; A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism.
- No. 6: The Labor Party in the United States; Is Nationalized Property Proletarian?
- No. 7: The Black Struggle — Which Road Today?
- No. 8: Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program — "Workers' Government vs. Workers' State.
- No. 9: Marxism and the Draft; Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism.
- No. 10: Polish Workers Shake the World; Full Text of the Gdansk Accords.
- No. 11: Iran: Revolution, War and Counterrevolution.

El Salvador

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Administration in the U.S. will do away with all pretensions of "human rights" reforms and turn to an open military solution. U.S. imperialism itself has no great economic stake in El Salvador (nor did it in Vietnam), but it cannot afford to see its influence in the strategically vital region be weakened. Nor can it allow its dominant world role be successfully challenged again. The U.S. goal under both Carter and Reagan is to defend the existing regime even if it means continued massacres. Imperialism has created ample precedent for this in El Salvador alone.

Background to the Crisis

In the late 1920's and early 1930's, as today, the class and anti-imperialist struggle in Central America had burst into open warfare. Particularly in El Salvador and Nicaragua, workers and peasants rose up in insurrection against the native bourgeoisie and the U.S. imperialists who stood behind them. In Nicaragua, the U.S. did not even rely on the national bourgeoisie — it occupied the country outright. A Nicaraguan small landowner's son, Augusto Cesar Sandino, led a peasant guerrilla army against the U.S. Marines. At one point a Salvadorean Communist, Agustin Farabundo Marti joined him during a period of exile in 1929-30.

As is evident from their name, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas look to Sandino as the inspiration for their policies. In El Salvador, the unified guerrilla army calls itself the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), and is attempting to reproduce the Nicaraguan events. What neither the Sandinistas nor the left organizations in El Salvador like to discuss are the differences between Farabundo Marti and Sandino which led them to a political (though not personal) break.

Farabundo Marti returned to El Salvador to lead the failed Salvadorean uprising of January 1932. He said of the break that Sandino "would not embrace my communist program. His banner was only that of national independence, ... not social revolution ..." The revolt that Farabundo and other communists led was badly planned, uncoordinated, and confused. But it was a widespread and heroic revolt of rural proletarians for a workers' republic.

The military dictatorship of General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez drowned the revolt in blood, executing tens of thousands of unarmed workers and landless peasants as well as Farabundo Marti and other leaders of the movement. Communists today may legitimately claim the 1932 uprising as a chapter in the history of the world proletarian revolution. Whatever his misunderstandings, Farabundo Marti was a magnificent figure who stood for the only road forward for human civilization, socialist revolution for a workers' state. The same cannot be said for those who claim to speak in Farabundo Marti's name in El Salvador today.

The present revolutionary crisis in El Salvador dates from the late 1960's and early 1970's. That period saw a slowdown in the economic growth of the preceding ten years. Foreign capital for the first time had invested massively in industry in El Salvador, taking advantage of the large working class, mostly wage-laborers on coffee plantations, who were available for other employment — at rock-bottom wages. The urban working class had grown to become over 40 percent of the workforce. The usual Menshevik-Stalinist rationalization



Salvadorean farm workers have gotten little land from the juntas, but many promises and a harvest of blood.

in underdeveloped countries against raising a proletarian banner is threadbare in El Salvador, given its class history and ample proletariat.

With the temporary prosperity, a semblance of bourgeois democracy grew up in the 1960's. There were some relatively free municipal and National Assembly elections. Real economic control, however, remained in the hands of the "oligarchy" or "fourteen families," the core of the Salvadorean bourgeoisie who started out in coffee-growing and processing. They ruled traditionally through military juntas or one-man dictatorships of their blood relatives. With the end of the prosperity of the sixties, the oligarchy and military saw the need to clamp down on the relative freedom that had existed.

After the 1972 presidential elections gave a landslide victory to Jose Napoleon Duarte (the Christian Democrat who is currently the military's front-man president), the army declared the results invalid and awarded the office to its own Colonel Molina. There followed a period of massacres of workers and leftists by the army and security forces as well as by semi-official death squads like the ORDEN group.

Formation of the Left

The same period saw the development of the left guerrilla groups. The first of these, the Farabundo Marti Peoples Liberation Forces (FPL), was originally the left wing of the pro-Moscow Communist Party (PCS). It had long objected to the legalism of the PCS, which restricted itself to electoral activity and sought a popular front coalition with bourgeois parties. The Peoples Revolutionary Army (ERP) was formed in 1972 largely from the left wing of the Christian Democrats. It split in 1975, the breakaway calling itself the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN).

The left groups originally disdained the kind of program for preserving capitalism that they have now in the Front; they wanted to do away with bourgeois exploitation completely. But they molded their ideas of socialism and revolutionary strategy after the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions; and these, while anti-imperialist, were not proletarian socialist. They were petty-bourgeois nationalist revolutions that resulted in the creation of state capitalist societies — which, given their capitalist nature, have been compelled over the years to seek

their peace with imperialism. (Fidel Castro, once a firebrand when it came to Latin American struggles, now tells his emulators not to follow the Cuban revolution but to go slow and accommodate to the U.S.)

So the basis for today's programmatic betrayal was laid at the start. The FPL had a "prolonged people's war" strategy modeled after Castro's, in which guerrilla armies gather in the countryside, harass the regime's forces and gradually build up strength to surround the cities and enter them in triumph. At best such a strategy leaves the working class on the sidelines waiting for the heroic guerrillas. Its inevitable outcome is not a proletarian state but a state capitalist regime ruling for and over the masses, no matter what the guerrillas' beneficent intentions. In El Salvador today it has done worse, leaving the workers exposed to the tender mercies of the military butchers.



Banner bearing the portrait of Augustin Farabundo Martí carried in a New York demonstration in solidarity with the Salvadorean struggle. Farabundo Martí stood for socialist revolution; epigones tailor revolt to bourgeois needs.

While the left organizations concentrated on building guerrilla armies, the military government was making itself ever more unpopular. In 1975 mass protests of workers and peasants broke out, some of them led by supporters of the FPL in the trade unions. This led to the formation of the mass "people's" organizations that exist today. The petty-bourgeois general staffs of the guerrilla groups formed organizations of workers and peasants which held demonstrations, strikes and seizures of factories and government facilities. These actions did not represent a break with guerrillaism but only its urban continuation. The factory seizures, for example, have been hit-and-run actions for limited economic demands, rather than attempts to expropriate the means of production by the working class.

By 1979, the military dictatorship, now in the hands of General Carlos Humberto Romero, had lost the support of the hierarchy of the Catholic church and other sectors of the bourgeoisie. With the fall of Somoza in Nicaragua, even the United States saw which way the wind was blowing. In order to prevent another revolution at its doorstep, the U.S. government helped some young officers in the Salvadorean

Army to kick out General Romero in October 1979. Led by Colonel Adolfo Arnoldo Majano, they set up a military-civilian junta with participation by Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and the PCS — which promised land reform, bank nationalizations and other good things. At first the liberal Archbishop of San Salvador, Arnulfo Romero, gave support to the new junta. But it provided the very thinnest cover for a new wave of repression. More assassinations of leftists, more massacres of demonstrators have occurred under the junta than under the previous openly reactionary dictatorship. After a few months the original three civilian representatives had resigned from the junta, and Archbishop Romero came out against it.

In March 1980 the junta, under increasing pressure from Washington, actually took over 600,000 acres of farmland from large landowners (who will be generously compensated) and seized a majority share in the banks (whose owners will likewise receive adequate compensation). Some observers have claimed that the land expropriations, carried out by the army, are for the benefit of members of ORDEN and other semi-fascist organizations. What is certain is that the land distribution is too minimal even to begin dealing with rural poverty and that at best it is aimed at creating a class of smallholders attached to the present system, in place of the turbulent rural proletariat. Like its counterpart in Vietnam (and with the same American guidance), it is also designed to expose the peasantry's leaders to the rightist bands. The bank nationalizations are aimed at stanching the hemorrhage of capital out of the country. Both measures were revealed as window dressing shortly after their passage by the assassination of the archbishop and a new massacre of demonstrators at his funeral, the work of security forces and the death squads.

The response of the left organizations to the increasingly revolutionary conditions was, first, to join forces with the PCS in the *Coordinadora* as soon as it decided to leave the junta's government. Then, by mid-April, when a succession of ministers and other officials had abandoned the "reformist" juntas, the Democratic Revolutionary Front was created to accommodate them. The latest recruit may well be Colonel Majano, the junta's founder who has since been ousted for his commitment to moderation. According to the January 12 *Washington Post*, officers loyal to Majano joined in the insurrection called by the left.

It makes perfect sense for such bourgeois elements to join the FDR. The "advanced Christian Democrats" and others welcomed by the FDR program figure that the revolution is unavoidable, so they want to help keep it within capitalist bounds and preserve their property — or even, in the case of the "small and medium-sized industrialists," who are promised "all kinds of stimulus and support," acquire more. As for the masses, they may have at first welcomed these defections on the grounds that it proved their side was winning. But then, as the FDR began to look more and more like the fake-reformist juntas they had rejected, they may well have wondered if it was worth giving their lives for. Reports indicate that there is increased cynicism among workers about the left's promised insurrection. FDR spokesmen have already retreated from calling it the "final" conflict with the dictatorship.

There is direct evidence for the workers' disillusionment. The general strike called on June 24 and 25 by the left was immensely successful: over 80 percent of economic and governmental activity was halted. But another general strike called for mid-August was apparently defeated. Police agents and soldiers rode the buses and crowded the streets, forcing most shops and offices to open. Even though 60 percent of the

capital city's factory workers honored the strike, the "preinsurrectionary rehearsal," as the strike was called, showed that an insurrection would be premature. A week later, on August 23, a strike by the radical electrical workers that paralyzed the country was broken by the army, which was able to take over the occupied plants and arrest the strike leaders without any opposition. The reliable *Latin America Weekly Report* (August 29) indicated that "No coordination was apparent between the militant workers and the armed wing of their organization."

Leftist Strategy Source of Defeats

The August strikes were defeated, clearly, not because the majority of workers wanted to support the regime but because they feared the government forces. The strategy of limited strikes, turned on and off like a faucet and separated from the insurrection in the countryside, leaves the workers defenseless. General strikes are weapons that necessarily pose the question of power, especially when carried out in revolutionary situations. The June strike was a success that led nowhere. A genuinely communist leadership would have made it a step towards workers' revolution, using it as a basis for factory councils, centralized working class and peasant organizations that could win over the ranks of the army, and armed takeovers of the factories and plantations. But for the FDR it was just propaganda for its diplomatic maneuvers with the Second International and religious institutions abroad. The workers were told to go back to work and wait for the diplomacy and guerrilla struggles to take effect.

If the leftist strategy is proving a disaster both on paper and in action, the Salvadorean bourgeoisie is not doing well either. The pretense of reformism has worn thin, Carter had to temporarily interrupt military aid when several Americans were killed in addition to the thousands of Salvadoreans. Few pretend now that the rightist murder squads are separate from the army. Even the conservative *Wall Street Journal* (January 15) routinely referred to the hostility of the masses and the need of capitalists to rely on army hit-men and paramilitary bands. If another 1932-style massacre is the only way to preserve capitalist property (as the rightist thugs proclaim), this time the working class is better armed and organized and will take the lives of many rightists.

But the working class can still hope to take away bourgeois power. The situation remains revolutionary. The guerrilla forces may not have won but they have not been smashed, and, more importantly, the working class is politically sophisticated and thoroughly ready for a total transformation of society. If it has grown disillusioned with the FDR leadership, there is still time for a change. A Trotskyist party is a crucial necessity in El Salvador; it would fight for a program of socialist revolution and politically challenge the tendencies in the *Coordinadora* for the leadership of the working class. This is a hard task, but the devastation and massacres wrought by imperialism prove once again that there is no alternative. It is to be hoped that Salvadorean revolutionaries are learning these lessons now out of their experience.

A key tactic for Salvadorean communists now is military support for the guerrilla struggle. The guerrilla strategy is a disaster for the workers, yet a government victory in the hinterlands would expose the urban and rural workers to extreme right-wing vengeance. Military support for the guerrillas is necessary as a defense of the working class; the best defense is the organization of self-defense in the factories, plantations and workers' communities. An armed general

strike in the cities would give the greatest possible aid to the left forces in the countryside — and it would nakedly expose the inadequacy of the guerrilla tactics.

The Salvadorean experience demonstrates once again that the task of building a Trotskyist vanguard means overcoming the pseudo-Trotskyists who support the guerrilla leftists not just militarily but politically and strategically. The United Secretariat, one of the larger pseudo-Trotskyist internationals, denounces as "sectarian" those who criticize the program of the FDR:

"Nor do we believe that the dynamic of permanent revolution of the struggle under way in El Salvador can be blocked or diverted because of certain expressions — which for our part we would not use — or even by certain ambiguous concepts which in any case do not correspond to their real content. In fact, the revolutionary organizations are putting forward a perspective of socialist revolution, and their program is not only anti-imperialist but also anti-capitalist. Only ossified dogmatists can interpret it as a popular front program." (*Quatrieme Internationale*, January-March 1981).

Unfortunately, the promise to preserve capitalist property is not an "ambiguous concept," even if the definition of a "medium-sized industrialist" is. And it corresponds perfectly to the "real content" of installing businessmen, Christian Democrats and bourgeois military officers in the future revolutionary government. The FDR's program is anti-capitalist only in the sense that it threatens the property of some individual capitalists. It does not challenge the existence of *capitalism*, the right of one class to exploit another and, through its agents, to rule the state. Not only is it a popular front program but it is the program of an existing popular front formation that the left organizations called into existence.

In the United States, the United Secretariat's affiliate, the Socialist Workers Party, is a leading element in the Salvadorean solidarity grouping CISPES which has a popular front strategy of its own: begging capitalist politicians and church figures to help the poor Salvadorean masses. Workers can feel only revulsion at the sermons preached by the priests and bleeding-heart liberals to whom CISPES turned over its January 11 Washington demonstration. Solidarity is absolutely necessary; but that means fighting for a revolutionary understanding of what the Salvadorean working class is facing, on the one hand, and mass action by the working class in the U.S., on the other. Prevention of all arms and military equipment shipments to the Salvadorean junta by American labor would be solidarity in its most critical and effective form. The boycott announced by an International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union on the West Coast is a step forward.

The popular front strategy now being carried out in El Salvador and proclaimed by leftists throughout the world was first adopted by the Stalinist parties in the 1930's. It led then to the defeat of the Spanish revolution, the limitation of French working class uprisings and the growth of fascism when bourgeois liberalism proved to be no answer to the misery of the masses. That it is being echoed by pseudo-Trotskyists today is only a reflection of the defeats undergone in the past half-century by both the working classes and Marxism. The prevention of another round of working-class slaughters requires total opposition to the popular front advocates in the working class and, to that end, the building of genuinely Trotskyist parties everywhere. The heroism and sacrifice of the Salvadorean masses shows that the problem lies less with the workers than with their betraying leaders. ■

For Socialist Revolution in El Salvador

The year-long civil war in the Central American country of El Salvador has come to a head. On the one side is the current government, which features Christian Democratic politicians as window dressing for a military junta and is the latest in a series imposed by the Carter administration since October 1979 in an attempt to create a pretense of reformism and moderation opposed to the militarist right and the "Marxist" left. But the continuing mass slaughter — ten thousand opponents have been killed in 1980 alone — has shown the government to be increasingly indistinguishable from the right-wing death squads. On the other side are the guerrilla fighters and the masses of peasants and workers who presently find themselves under the leadership of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), which announced in mid-January an insurrection to overthrow the regime.

A wave of mass strikes and factory and plantation seizures beginning in early 1979 has proved that the Salvadorean masses are fighting for equality, prosperity and an end to capitalist exploitation. However, the widely circulated program for a "democratic revolutionary government" promulgated by the FDR promises something different. True, it calls for nationalization of the banks, foreign trade and major industries, for agrarian reform and for national economic planning. But it also promises to preserve the property of "small and medium landholders," and it offers a governmental role to "small and medium-sized industrialists" and "worthy and honest officers" of the butcher army, among other bourgeois gentlemen. It is a program that desperately seeks to reassure Salvadorean and imperialist capitalists that the mass struggle will not uproot their property and state power.

The FDR itself is a popular front coalition of working class and bourgeois forces. Its strength is based on several political-military left groups that won leadership of trade unions and other mass organizations in the late 1970's; these are linked in the *Coordinadora*, the Revolutionary Coordinating Council of the Masses (CRM) formed in January 1980. The Front also includes Christian Democratic and other bourgeois politicians, some of whom participated in the various governments within the past year. (Until his murder in November along with four other leaders of the FDR, it was headed by Enrique Alvarez Cordoba, the junta's first Minister of Agriculture and the "black sheep" of one of El Salvador's traditional ruling families.) The left organizations call themselves Marxist and individually claim to stand for socialism. Yet the program for the maintenance of capitalism cited above was issued by their council, the CRM. It was later accepted by the bourgeois elements when they joined with the *Coordinadora* to form the Front in May.

While the U.S. government under Carter tried all it could do to keep the military-civilian juntas in power, other capitalist countries, notably West Germany and Mexico, are backing the insurgents. That is because the regime's murderous repression has generated a revolutionary movement of such proportions that capitalist rule in El Salvador and all of Central America is threatened, despite the program of the FDR. Their hope is that the FDR's leadership will be able to hold the masses to its program and at least keep the revolutionary wave from spreading.

Nationalist Capitalism No Solution

The masses have to learn quickly that an "anti-imperialist program" that pleases another country's imperialism is poison for them. The truth is that no bourgeois government, not even a revolutionary nationalist one, can carry out the kind of reforms promised by the FDR. No nation can go it alone in this epoch of imperialism, especially a small country that has been raped by the imperialists and lacks the resources to provide for its people's needs. If the revolt brewing throughout Central America is short-circuited and results only in the establishment of left-leaning pro-capitalist regimes, a new deal between the indigenous bourgeoisie and imperialism will inevitably be struck. The capitalists and their governments will be forced to clamp down hard on the workers. The Sandinista regime in Nicaragua is the model: it is no accident that it is engaged in breaking strikes, preserving capitalist property and re-establishing strong dependent economic ties to the U.S. If the FDR is able to take power in El Salvador, the present slaughter will end but the cycle of imperialist domination, repression and brutal exploitation will shortly begin anew.

There is only one alternative: socialism through proletarian revolution. In Central America, the prospects have never been better. The Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua was smashed by a working class uprising in July 1979, and the anti-capitalist struggle has still not been quelled by the Sandinistas. There is mass radical unrest in Guatemala and Honduras in addition to El Salvador. The creation of a Socialist Federation of Central America could guarantee the masses what they are fighting for as no bourgeois program can. The victory of a workers' revolution in El Salvador would ignite revolutionary tinderboxes throughout the world.

The Central American bourgeoisies understand this prospect very well. The Guatemalan and Honduran dictatorships are supporting El Salvador's army and semi-official rightist militias to the hilt. Their hope is that the Reagan